



RELATE

ADULT CONNECT CLASS CURRICULUM

DONALD J. WILLS
SENIOR PASTOR



JANUARY
2020

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

It is hard to believe another year has past and I am reminded of the passage in John 4:35 where Jesus expresses there is no delay in reaping the harvest; time passes too quickly. One of the major aspects of our ability in reaching the harvest and ministering to the saints is the faithfulness of God's people in the area of stewardship. This is crucial to our effectiveness as a church to impact our community with the gospel. How, you say? The usage of our facilities, printed materials, discipleship materials, staffing, utilities etc. are all tools for promoting and proclaiming the good news while producing mature followers of Christ. This month it is about obedience in the area of stewardship.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God's Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

In closing, many in our church family are very faithful in the discipline of stewardship while others struggle in their walk and obedience in this area. If you happen to be part of the latter, let me encourage as well as challenge you to truly trust God in every area of your life which includes your finances. Hebrews 10:23 reminds us that when it comes to our profession of faith "He who promised is Faithful!" The Lord is always faithful. We should walk with Him in every area!

-Blessings
Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

Contents

January Lesson Plan

3



January 5, 2020

Giving as a Good Steward

Overview from the Old and New Testament

17

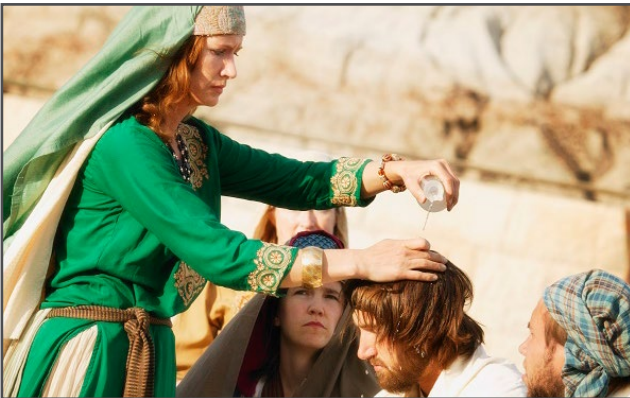


January 12, 2020

Giving as an Act of Surrender

[Luke 19:1-10](#)

31

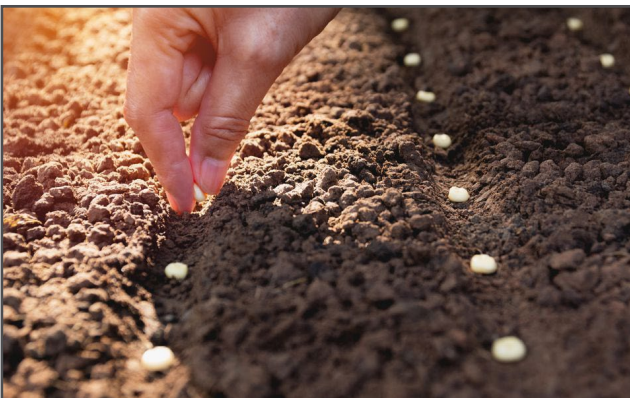


January 19, 2020

Giving as an Act of Sacrifice

[Mark 14:1-9](#)

43



January 26, 2020

Giving Enables Effective Service

[Luke 8:1-15](#)

January 5, 2020



Giving as a Good Steward Overview from the Old and New Testament

Focal Verse:

"They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' And He said to them, 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'"

[back to
Table of
Contents](#)

Matthew 22:21

Introduce

Several years ago, W. A. Criswell related a story about a man who had gone to his pastor for financial counseling and to request prayer for a higher-paying job that would better meet his needs. During the course of the conversation, the man revealed that he had pledged to be faithful in giving a tithe of his income to the Lord each week. At the time of this conversation, the man was earning \$40 a week and faithfully tithing \$4. As they sat in his office, the pastor graciously agreed to pray with him for God's will in his career path and salary. Within a short time, God blessed him with a better-paying position and the



man had to increase his tithe to \$500 per week. So, once again, he sought counsel with his pastor—not so they could rejoice in what God had done, but so he could inquire how to break his promise to the Lord because his tithe had become “too costly.” With godly wisdom, the venerable pastor responded, “I don’t see how you can be released from your promise, but we could ask God to reduce your income to \$40 a week, then you’d have no problem tithing \$4.00!”

In Scripture, God has commanded His people to tithe faithfully upon the income that we receive—no matter how much or how little. In everything with which God has blessed us, we should set aside a portion (10% at least) to return to Him. Although God has commanded us to give tithes and offerings, we must do so with the right attitude! We don’t give legalistically as to curry favor and good standing with the Lord; we should give generously and cheerfully because we love Him! Moreover, we don’t give simply to be blessed—as the man in the example above did. God will certainly bless us when we give faithfully, but we must still give with the correct motives. We give to honor the Lord and help further His kingdom! The Bible clearly tells us to whom we should give, what we should give, why we should give, and how we should give. To understand giving and stewardship, therefore, we must first seek the Lord’s perspective and hear what He says on this topic.

Over the course of this month, we will examine the concept of stewardship and look at

Introduce

what God requires of us in giving back to Him with what He has so graciously given us. After overviewing the concept of giving this week in both the Old and New Testaments, we will examine some unconventional stories in the following weeks not usually applied to stewardship, but which still demonstrate godly principles about giving. In Zacchaeus' example, we will learn how giving is an "Act of Surrender" ([Luke 19:1-10](#)). Through a woman who anointed Jesus' head with costly oil, we can see how giving is an "Act of Sacrifice" ([Mark 14:1-9](#)). Finally, as an itinerate preacher, Jesus didn't have many possessions of His own, but He depended upon people to help Him by providing food and lodging, so we should regard giving as "Enabling Effective Service" ([Luke 8:1-15](#)). As we journey through this concept, let each of us examine our own giving to determine how it compares to that found in Scripture!

Key
Question

According to Scripture, what does the Lord require in our giving?

In Reference

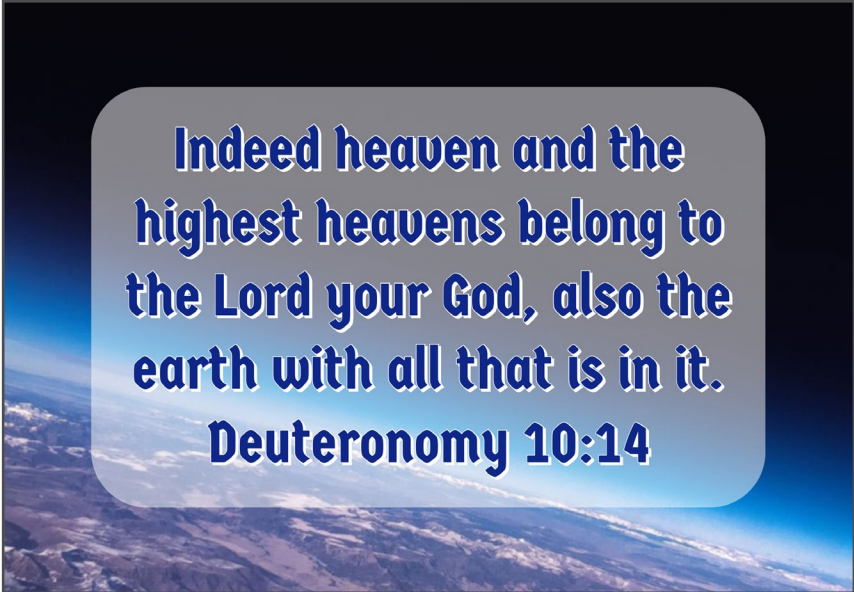


See W. A. Criswell, *Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1984), p. 156.

Instruct

To Whom Should We Give?

The Old Testament clearly describes that everything on earth belongs to God ([Deut 10:14](#); [1 Chron 29:11](#); and [Psalm 24:1](#)); therefore, as followers of Christ, we function as stewards of God's creation—in terms of both natural and financial resources with which God has entrusted us as well as the spreading of the gospel message ([Gen 1:28-30](#)). For this reason, a steward functions as a representative of the owner who acts on His behalf to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Master's business and the care of His property and possessions. When we give our tithes and offerings, we acknowledge His Lordship in our lives and we return a portion to Him from that with which He has blessed us and allowed us to utilize to provide for the needs of our families; thus, the tithes and offerings that we give belong wholly to the Lord. In fact, [Lev 27:30](#) explicitly recognizes that "all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord."



Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that is in it.
Deuteronomy 10:14

How do we function as stewards of creation as a whole and the resources God has given us?

Question
1

We shouldn't view the Old Testament as outdated or obsolete, but at the basis for Jesus' teaching in the New Testament by which He instructs us to live. In [Matt 5:17-19](#), Jesus teaches that He did not come to abolish or to make the Law invalid; rather He came to fulfill or complete the Law and demonstrate the proper way to interpret it. Moreover, Jesus continues to reveal that not even the smallest letter of the Law will pass away and "whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven." Clearly, Jesus affirms the validity and permanence of the Old Testament, not in a legalistic way, but rather as a display of God's transformative power in our lives. Consequently, we should uphold

Instruct

the principles associated with tithes and offerings both in the Old and New Testaments. For example, after the Pharisees ask Jesus about the legality of giving taxes to Rome, He explains: “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” ([Matt 22:21](#)). Although Jesus doesn’t specify whether this is tithe or a temple tax, the principle applies that as believers we should give to God what belongs to Him starting with our very lives as a living sacrifice as well as our time, talent, and tithes ([Rom 12:1-2](#); [2 Cor 8:5](#)).

Why is Jesus’ ultimate fulfillment of the Law not an excuse to reject the principle of tithing?

Question
2

Conversely, if we fail to return the portion from which God has blessed us or fail to give from the very best portion that we can, the Bible identifies this as robbing the Lord. For example, the prophet Malachi in 3:8 describes that withholding tithes and offerings from the Lord constitutes robbery: “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.” The people, at this time, were bringing maimed and deformed sacrifices to the Lord and saving the very best for themselves. Fortunately, however, God does not abide by this principle of stinginess and selfishness for He sent the very best sacrifice in His Son so that we might have life through the spotless and unblemished Lamb who hung upon the cross. Therefore, if God gave His very best, shouldn’t we also give our very best to Him in return—even though we could never repay the sacrifice which He sent to die in our place?

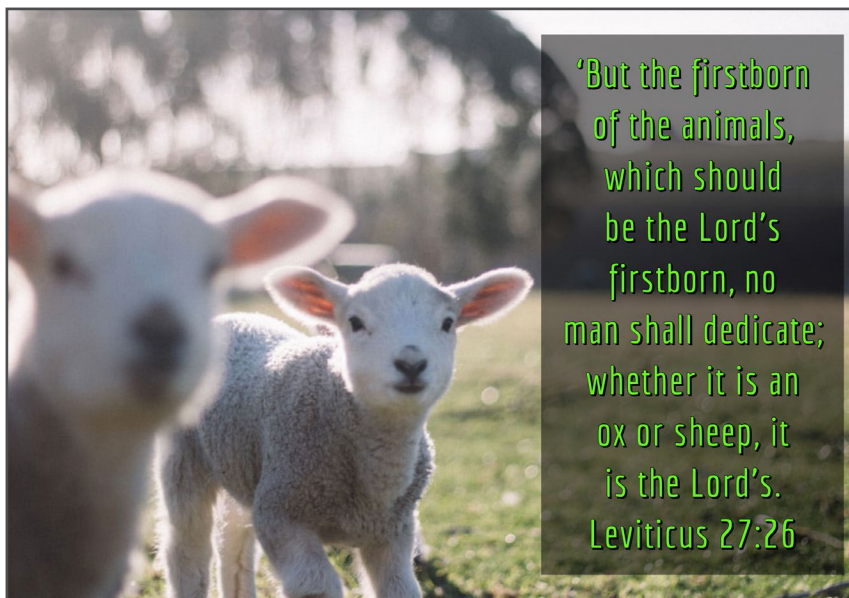
In what ways do we rob the Lord when we don’t give our best (not just monetarily speaking)?

Question
3

What Should We Give?

The word *tithe* literally means 10%, but this, in fact, is only the minimum which should be given. In actuality, Israel gave on average around one-quarter of her income to tithes and offerings when one counts the special offerings and annual tithes. For instance, [Deut 14:22-27](#) describes a tithe from the yearly income that a person receives—in this agrarian economy it is in terms of the produce from the harvest. Furthermore, [Deut 26:1-4](#) specifies that the tithe should not merely be the leftovers

from the harvest, but rather from the firstfruits. Similarly, [Lev 27:26](#) also requires that firstborn animals be dedicated as an offering to the Lord. In addition to the tithe on yearly income, another tithe was offered in support of the Levitical priests who served the people, but did not have any land for themselves or ways of making money because they focused on undertaking the ministerial activities that God had assigned them ([Num 18:21-32](#)).



Finally, every third year, Israel collected an offering dedicated to helping the poor and destitute—in other words an offering for ministry within the community ([Deut 14:28-29](#)).

Outside of the Law, Abraham and Jacob both gave 10% of their entire possessions to the Lord or a servant of the Lord. For example, Jacob states, “And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You” (Gen 28:22). With whatever resources with which God blessed Jacob over the years of his life, he would give back one-tenth of all his possessions, including money, land, livestock, and harvests; this is Jacob’s promise for the past, present, and future. Notice that Jacob says all that the Lord “gives” him in the present tense which constitutes an on-going action. From whatever he receives weekly, monthly, or annually, Jacob will give (future tense) a tithe unto the Lord; therefore, it is not a one-time gift, but rather an on-going act of worship to the Lord for the provision that He has given him.

Why should we give on an on-going basis rather than an act which we only do occasionally?

Question
4

Why Should We Give?

When we ask ourselves the question why we should give, it has a rather simple answer. We are to give because God has commanded us as we have seen from Scripture thus far. In His commands, the Lord also describes the purposes for which He will use our tithes and offerings. He uses them to support ministries that impact the community,

Instruct

and helps to spread the gospel; for instance, the Lord makes provision for widows and orphans who cannot care for themselves ([Deut 14:28-29](#); [1 Tim 5:3-16](#); [James 1:27](#)).



In addition, they help provide for full-time staff who organize and oversee the ministry of the local church as well as support missionaries and others entities so that they can focus on spreading the gospel rather than constantly face the need to fundraise ([Num 18:21-32](#); [1 Cor 9:7-14](#); [1 Tim 5:17-18](#)).* In addition, God uses tithes and offerings to care for His temple

where the people would meet daily to worship Him, such as during campaigns in Exodus and Nehemiah.

How do tithes and offerings help the church do ministry?

Question
5

In-Depth Information



The Lord doesn't command only laypeople to give, but He also instructs full-time ministers serving in the local church to give as well. In [Num 18:26](#), the Levites were required to give 10% as a tithe too. As the religious leaders of their day, they should have served as an example to the laypeople in returning their tithes and offerings unto the Lord which they had graciously received. Everyone in Israel, both priests and lay people, were required to give to the Lord. Even today, everyone has a responsibility to participate in the continuing work of the Lord through giving tithes and offerings and by serving.

Based upon this overview from Scripture about giving and tithing, we can identify two principles which we can apply in our lives. First, 10% is the minimum that we should give back to the Lord, but as He blesses us then we should give much more to His work as God lays on our hearts. Second, we are to give from all of our income

and possessions which God has entrusted us; we are not merely to give that which is leftover after we pay our bills and satisfy our desires, but rather we are to set aside and give unto God based on the gross income that we have received during the year.

What would be the result if everyone gave faithfully as God has asked?

Question
6

How Should We Give?

Scripture gives us three categories of attitudes by which we should gauge our giving. We should give: 1) willingly and regularly, 2) generously and sacrificially, and 3) worshipfully. Overall, Scripture instructs us to give with purpose with a cheerful attitude as God leads. When meeting the needs in the famine-stricken Jerusalem church, Paul urges the Corinthians to “give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity” ([2 Cor 9:7; 8:2](#)). Both John and Luke share this same concern that the needs of those in the community might be met through the church; in his first letter, John describes meeting the needs of the brethren more broadly whereas in Acts Luke notes that those in the church who had means sold their properties and brought the revenue to the apostles to distribute to those who had needs ([1 John 3:17; Acts 4:34-35](#)).

Give Willingly and Regularly

Throughout the Bible, tithes and offerings are to be given to God willingly and regularly. In [1 Cor 16:2](#), Paul encourages the Corinthian believers to “on the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper,” so that they may help the church in Jerusalem stricken by a severe famine. In addition to regular and faithful giving, we are to give willingly. Writing to the Corinthians about the Macedonians’ willingness to give, Paul explains, “For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing” ([2 Cor 8:3](#)). Two more times in [2 Cor](#)



Instruct

8 Paul characterizes the Macedonians' giving out of a "readiness and desire" and out of a "willing mind" ([2 Cor 8:11-12](#)). We are not to give out of a begrudging or compulsory attitude, but we are to give willingly because everything that we have indeed has come from God and belongs to Him ([1 Cor 4:7](#)). Similarly, 1 Chron 29:14 affirms, "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You."

With what attitude do you give your tithes and offerings to the Lord?

Question
7

Too often, believers today use the excuse that they do not have the resources on which they can give tithes and offerings; they claim that if only they could reach a certain level of comfort in their income then they would have the means to give to the Lord. However, most never achieve that level of income and even if they achieve their goal they fail to give because they are never satisfied with the amount they receive; thus, many believers tend to focus on that which they do not have rather than what they do have. In 2 Cor 8:12-13, Paul interjects, "For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have for I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened." By focusing on that which we do not have, we have become poor stewards of what we do have. Paul isn't asking the Corinthian church to give in such a way that it affects their livelihood thereby impoverishing them, but rather he is encouraging them to focus first on the things with which God has entrusted them and to use these resources to impact the community in a positive way.

When you look at the things that you don't have, how does it affect your giving?

Question
8

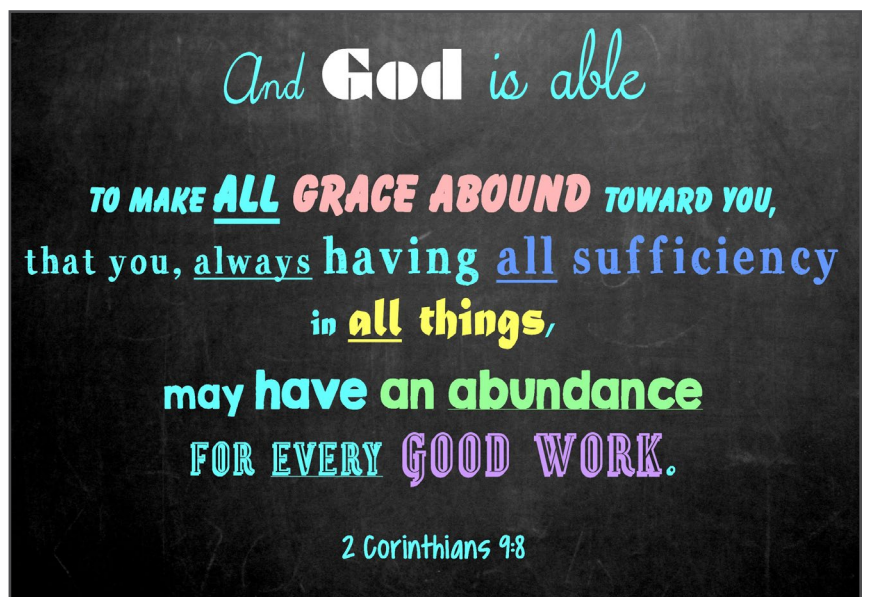
Give Generously and Sacrificially

When we give willingly, we give from a cheerful and joyful heart, recognizing that God has given us the ultimate gift in His Son. For this reason, Paul writes, "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7). Giving should never become a legalistic response to the Law, but rather it should come from our love and gratefulness for God's own generosity

which reflects His character. After all, we are called to imitate Christ and God’s holiness ([Eph 5:1-2](#); [Phil 2:5](#)). Both the Old and New Testaments share this concept of giving generously. In [Deut 15:10-11](#), Moses exhorts the people to give generously to meet the needs of the community, particularly the poor: “You shall surely give to him [that is the poor], and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand.” When giving so that the church may have the proper resources to minister to the community and spread the gospel, we must remember to give generously ([2 Cor 9:5](#)).

We should also give sacrificially—even beyond that which we are asked or required. Jesus, for instance, recognizes the sacrifice of a widow who placed her offering in the temple treasury. When compared to the other wealthy individuals, the amount that she gave seemed insignificant even for that day; yet, she gave more than everyone else, for she gave all that she had ([Luke 21:1-4](#)). Likewise, Paul also encourages the wealthy to not “be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share” ([1 Tim 6:17-18](#)). Certainly, in terms of our incomes we will give differing amounts, but every one of us should learn to give sacrificially just as God Himself has given to us sacrificially.



What does it mean to give sacrificially according to Scripture?

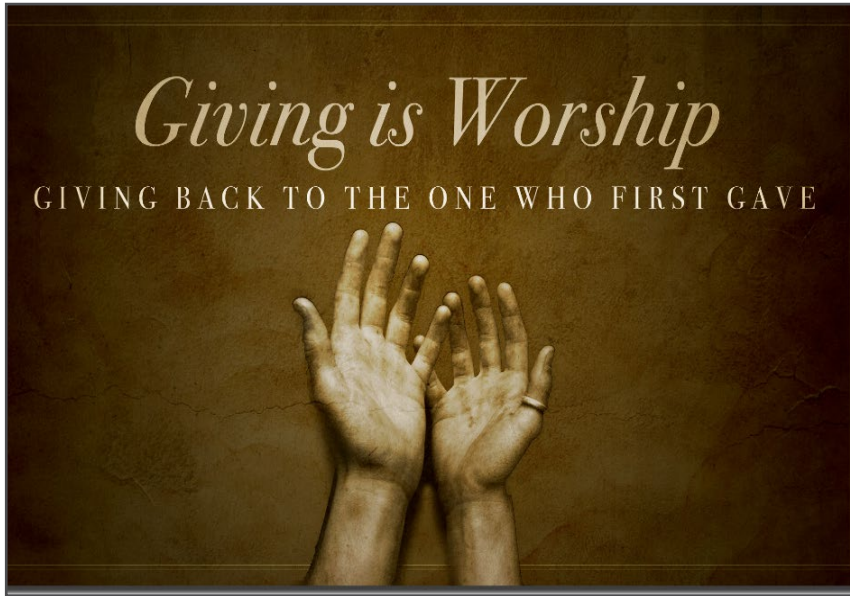
Question # 9

Give Worshipfully

Finally, we are to give with a worshipful attitude, thanking God for that which He has done for us. Scripture notes that our giving is always directed toward God—not to support a particular program or person, but rather as an offering that honors glorifies the Lord. For example, Paul affirms, “While, through the proof of this ministry, they

Instruct

glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men" ([2 Cor 9:13](#)). In other words, through their giving God was glorified. Above all, we are to give with gratitude and thanksgiving in our hearts. Paul exclaims, "While you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God" ([2 Cor 9:11-12](#)). Just as Christ has given everything in obedience to the call the Father placed on His life ([Phil 2:8](#)), let us give worshipfully in obedience to the grace that He has indeed shown us!



How is giving an act of worship?

Question
10

The Bible gives us clear direction on giving and being good stewards of all the resources the Lord has graciously given us. When we follow these principles, giving never becomes an imposition or a liability, but it always becomes a blessing! We may not be “blessed” according to the world’s perspective and standard, but the Lord never forsakes those who give with the right attitude and for the right reasons. We may not have excessive material wealth, but God gives contentment to those who love and obey Him—just like He did the apostle Paul whether he had a little or much ([Phil 4:12](#)). Consequently, He will never allow us to go without having our needs met and will always meet them according to His glorious riches in heaven ([Phil 4:19](#)). Moreover, He often makes our possessions and earthly investments last longer. We must simply trust Him and surrender total control to Him—including all our finances!

Most likely, we can ask any faithful giver about how the Lord has blessed him and he will tell us a similar story: God has been faithful! From personal experience, I can testify to the goodness and greatness of the Lord in giving. Although I have never had abundant riches, God has always supplied my needs—even when I had only pennies left to my name—and allowed me to experience contentment in my life no matter what my external circumstances may be. Therefore, let us encourage each other to remain faithful in our giving—not because we expect a certain kind of blessing in our lives, but because we have a faithful God who loves us. Let every one of us do our part by giving what the Lord has commanded, so that we can continue to spread the gospel, expand the kingdom, and reach the world! Let us examine ourselves according to the biblical model of giving and give our tithes and offerings faithfully because we love the Lord and desire to honor Him for the tremendous sacrifice He has graciously given to us.

Incorporate

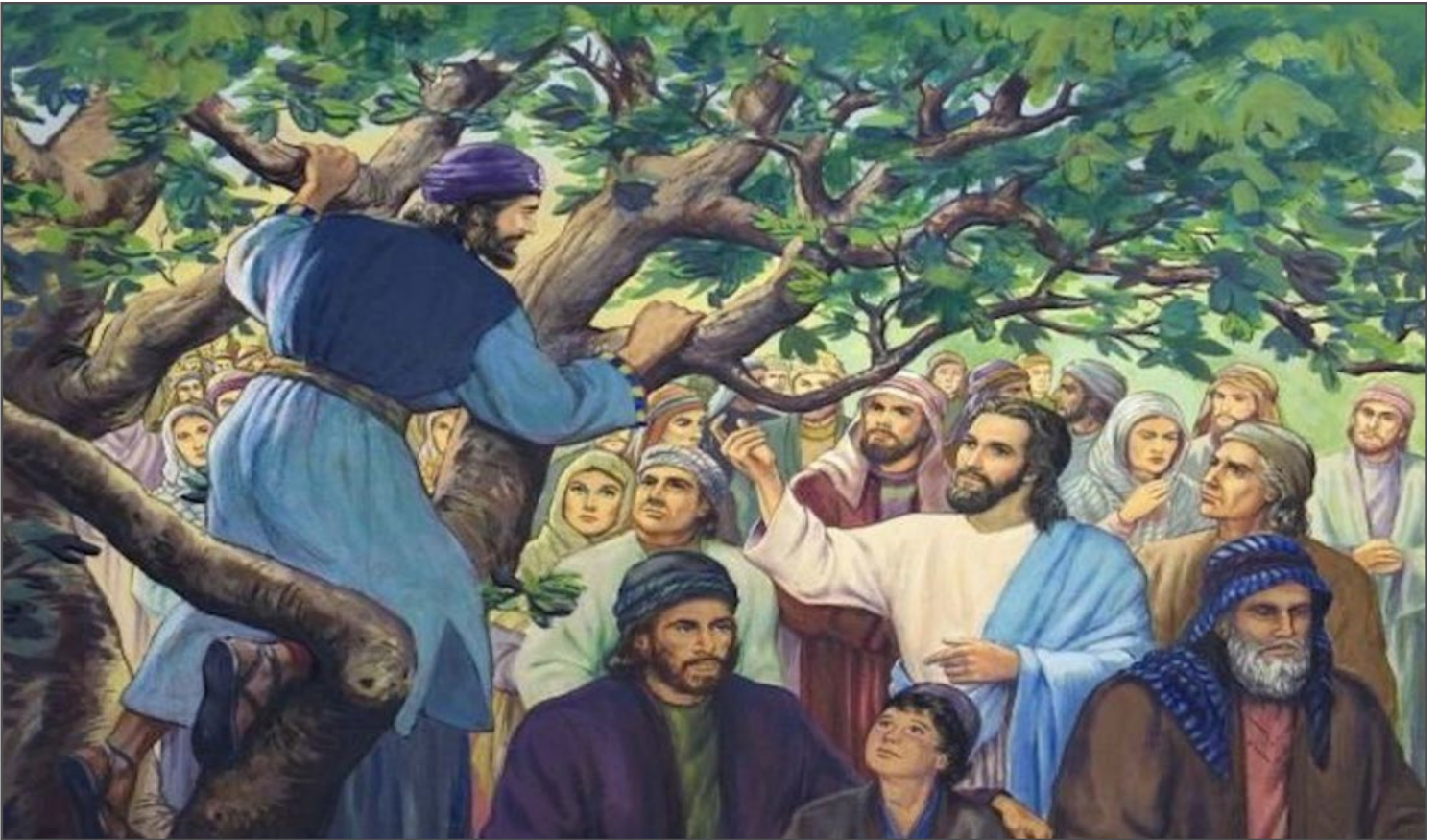
How faithful are you in giving your tithes and offerings to the Lord? When you have faithfully given, how have you seen the Lord be faithful to you in return?

What is the danger in comparing our giving in terms of what others give? How has the Lord asked you to give sacrificially in the past? How did things turn out when you were obedient?

What happens when everyone doesn't give faithfully in the church? How do our tithes and offerings help minister to the community?

Journal: Document God's Work

January 12, 2020



Giving as an Act of Surrender

Luke 19:1-10

Focal Verse:

“Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.’”

Luke 19:8

back to
Table of
Contents

Introduce

After several years of working for a large tax-preparation company, Irma Rene Smith started a business of her own. Over the years, it grew into a larger operation in which she had four employees working under her, but she still oversaw every account personally. Although she and her company did appear to do good work, she incorporated many hidden fees which substantially increased her commission while lowering that of her employees. Not only would she collect these unscrupulous fees, but she would also slightly alter her client's tax forms submitted by her employees. She manipulated them only just enough so that the Internal Revenue Service wouldn't question



their accuracy. In doing so, she could charge her clients a larger percentage for her services based upon the greater amount they had returned or the lesser amount they had to pay. For years, no one ever discovered her scheme or questioned why she reviewed *every* document. The scheme worked well and she annually received more than \$150,000 from these altered forms alone! In total, she would make over \$750,000 a year with all the fees and charges associated with her services.

As Irma sat in her office changing the already prepared tax forms, she gloated as she signed her initials as preparer, I.R.S., because no one would ever catch on to this scheme; the plan was perfect! As the years passed, she became extraordinarily wealthy, but less content. In fact, she had become miserly and miserable. One day, she began to recall a story she had heard as a little girl about another person who oversaw the collection of taxes. As she pondered the direction of her life, she thought about how this man had a life-changing experience in which he responded joyfully and generously to an invitation to have salvation and eternal life in Christ Jesus. With this new-found relationship, the man no longer had a greedy heart, fixated on money, but he repented and found true happiness in Christ.

Right there in her office, she began to weep because she realized the extent of her sin. She didn't quite know how to pray, so she just began talking as if Christ were sitting

Introduce

in the chair in front of her desk. She explained how she felt remorse for swindling so many people, including the US government. She now understood how she must surrender her whole life to the Lord—including trusting Him with her financial well-being. She had always attended church and tried to live a somewhat good life in front of others, but she had never fully surrendered to the Lord. So, as she continued talking with Christ, she surrendered herself completely into His control. She declared that she would give half her wealth to help community ministry and repay four-fold to the people whom she had swindled. Today, salvation had come unto Irma Rene Smith which led to a radical transformation in her life.

As we continue our series on stewardship, Irma and Zacchaeus' stories may seem to have little to do with giving. We probably rarely, if ever, have seen this story used as an illustration of how we ought to give. When we have a relationship with Christ, however, it transforms our attitude about giving because we understand true surrender. We first must surrender our very lives to Christ. Speaking about the Macedonians, Paul writes, "And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord" ([2 Cor 8:5](#)). When we completely surrender ourselves to the Lord, we will live in obedience to His Word and submit to His leadership. Undoubtedly, this total surrender will lead us not only to exercise integrity in every area of our lives, but also be generous and faithful givers. Therefore, let us follow this pattern. Let us surrender our lives fully to the Lord by having a relationship with Him characterized by repentance and transformation. Then, let us allow that relationship to transform us into the givers that we ought to be.

Key
Question

What does it look like to surrender control of our finances to the Lord?

THE COMPULSION:

While on His way to Jerusalem to bear the sins of the world on the cross (Luke 9:51), Jesus **passed through** the city of Jericho (v. 1). This leg of his journey was no accident, but a divine appointment to take the life-changing gospel to the whole world, particularly to **a man named Zacchaeus** (v. 2)! Wherever He traveled, Jesus attracted large crowds because people had heard of the miracles that He performed and the radical way in which He taught. Thus, we find **a man** by the name of **Zacchaeus** who desperately wanted to catch a glimpse of Jesus as He **passed through** town. Luke describes him as **a chief tax collector** and **rich**. Although Luke doesn't divulge any other background details, we know from historical records, and commonsense, that people despised tax collectors. At that time, tax collectors were considered dishonest because they would bid for their services and impose a "collection" fee on taxpayers in order to enrich themselves. As **a chief tax collector**, Zacchaeus likely had others working under him, so he would also take a percentage of their collections too—making him an exceedingly **rich** man.

Yearning **to see who Jesus was**, Zacchaeus faced two obstacles: 1) **the crowd** was extremely large and 2) **he was short** in height (v. 3). Nonetheless, he felt a compulsion to see Jesus, so he didn't allow anything to stop or sidetrack him. He didn't have the advantages that we have today to stay at home and watch Jesus on television, so he had to concoct a plan quickly to ensure he would at least catch a glimpse. He would run **ahead of the crowd** and find a vantage point where he could see. As he **ran ahead**, he found a **sycamore tree** which he could ascend and sit on one of its broad branches (v. 4). Zacchaeus was determined not to miss this significant moment!



What are some things that sidetrack us in our pursuit of Jesus?

Question
1

Instruct

Although he didn't have a relationship with Jesus at that time, Zacchaeus overcame numerous obstacles and distractions in order to put himself in a place where he could see Him. As believers, we too need to focus on Christ, so that we can see Him and follow the example He has set ([Heb 12:2](#)). We live in world of distractions which can easily overwhelm us even when we have the best of intentions. Therefore, we need to be intentional in our pursuit of Christ; we need to compel ourselves to follow after Him no matter the cost. Zacchaeus could have said, "There will be too many people there. I'm wasting my time; I'll never see Him!" He could have also lamented, "I'm too short; there is no way I can see over the crowd. I'll never be able to get in the front." Rather than make excuses, he expressed resolve. If he had allowed these obstacles to influence him negatively, he would have missed a divine encounter with Christ. Many times, however, we may count the cost and make excuses because the times have become tough. On the contrary, we need to seek Christ with anticipation and expectation of what He will do in our lives. Instead of fearing what we don't know and the unknown, let us seek Christ so that He can direct our paths! We will encounter plenty of obstacles along the way, but we can't walk through life defeated. At times, we may face physical challenges with our health, challenges in our relationships, challenges in our financial stability and security, and challenges that the fallen world around us hurls at our lives; however, we cannot allow them to sidetrack our pursuit of Christ. We need to trust Him and look to Him to find solutions, so that as we overcome obstacles we can grow in our faith and service to Him.

How can we overcome distractions and challenges in our lives to remain focused on following Christ?

Question
2

Financially, Zacchaeus didn't face many of the obstacles that we may face because he was **rich**—albeit through somewhat ill-gotten means. Most of us likely live from paycheck to paycheck; we may have a small savings and a decent retirement, but we don't have the luxury of being carefree with our spending. At times, we may experience the loss of a job or other income; we may have unexpected expenditures or bills or major repairs that we need on our home or appliances. Whereas at other times, we may face obstacles of our own doing: lack of self-control in spending, excessive debt, or misplaced priorities. If we have truly surrendered ourselves to Christ, we

cannot let these things distract us from giving as He directs us. Instead, we need to seek Him, just as Zacchaeus did, in all things and surrender the control of our finances to Him as well; therefore, we should seek His will and how we should invest our money—even if this means re-prioritizing some of our spending and changing some of our habits—which we will observe later in this story.



What obstacles have you sometimes faced in your giving? How has the Lord helped you to overcome them and mature in your faith?

Question
3

Luke 19:5-6

THE CALL:

Even though Zacchaeus went to seek Jesus, Jesus actually **sought** and found him! As **Jesus came to the place** where Zacchaeus had climbed onto the **sycamore tree**, He looked up and addressed him by name (v. 5). Out of all the people in the crowd who pressed around him, Jesus singled out Zacchaeus and called to him. He commanded him to **come down** quickly because He **must stay at his house today**. The way Jesus states this request shows that He is on a divine mission to have a personal conversation with Zacchaeus. Literally, the Greek says, “It is necessary **I stay at your house.**” At this point, Zacchaeus had no relationship with Jesus although he was intrigued by Him; however, Christ **sought** him personally to offer salvation unto him. Jesus does the same with each one of us; He calls us by name and invites us individually to have a relationship with Him.

Jesus’ personal interaction with Zacchaeus reminds us of three parables in Luke 15: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (Prodigal Son). In the first two, the emphasis lies on one thing which was lost and how the owner went out to search for and rescue the lost object. The owners searched diligently and devoted their energy and time to locate this one lost item. No cost was too great for them to endure and they left no stone unturned! In the latter parable, the father of the wayward son graciously forgives

Instruct

him and accepts him when he comes to his senses and returns.

Christ did the same with Zacchaeus and the same with us when we were lost in our sins and trespasses. He **sought** us and found us, so that He could rescue us through His life-giving sacrifice upon the cross. Imagine that. The Creator of the universe came to seek us personally! When the Sovereign King of the universe came in the flesh, He offered His very best; He devoted His very life to pursue a relationship with us. Not even the cost of a horrendous death upon the cross was too great for Him to pay. He gladly and willingly laid down His life for each one of us! What a tremendous debt we owe Him for rescuing us from sin and helping us overcome death.

Why is it significant that Jesus seeks and calls us individually? How should this affect the way we relate to Him?

Question
4

Probably shocked that Jesus had paid particular attention to him, Zacchaeus responded immediately to Jesus' request. He scrambled **down** from the **tree** and **received** Christ **joyfully** (v. 6). Zacchaeus responded with joy and excitement to Jesus'



command because he would get to host this Teacher whom he had so desperately **sought to see!** He didn't hesitate, but responded right away. He could have thought about the imposition this would create upon him because Jesus asked on the spur of the moment; on the other hand, he could have focused on all the preparations needed to host such

a distinguished guest. Quite oppositely, his joyful and excited response shows his willingness to host Jesus and extend generous hospitality.

Like Zacchaeus, we ought to receive the commands, requests, and directives of Christ **joyfully** and we ought to obey without hesitation! Obviously, in this current context, it refers to the literal instruction to climb **down** from the **tree** and receive Jesus into his **home** with the overarching goal of leading the **tax collector** to repentance and

salvation. Ultimately, Zacchaeus had to learn to trust Christ and surrender to Him, which as we shall see was borne out through his transformed life based upon his repentance and renewed perspective about his wealth. Yet, not only should we respond immediately to His offer of salvation, but we should also obey immediately in any area of our lives for which He has given us specific directions in His Word. When Scripture has given us clear and specific guidelines on any matter, such as stewardship and tithing which we discussed last week, we should listen and obey immediately. We shouldn't question what we ought do when the Bible has already addressed it specifically; we should simply do it!

Just as Christ willingly devoted Himself to **seek and save the lost**, we also ought to devote ourselves entirely unto Him! Jesus gave everything He had, including His life, to fulfill the wish of the Father and rescue us from our sin. Therefore, He reveals, "No one takes it [my life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" ([John 10:18](#)). He didn't do this out of a sense of legalistic duty, but because He loves us so much and desires a relationship with us! In doing so, He obediently fulfilled the command the Father had given Him. Likewise, we should obey willingly and **joyfully** rather than begrudgingly and legalistically. Like Christ, we obey not out of sense of duty or obligation, but because we love the Lord and desire to honor Him!

In what ways can we show our love and devotion to Christ in how we live and how we use the resources which He has given us?

Question
5

Luke 19:7

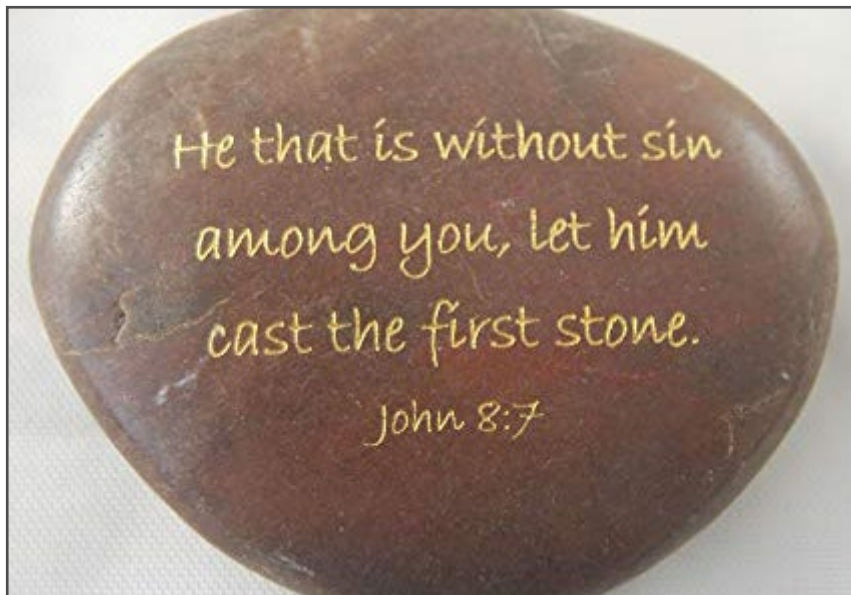
THE COMPLAINT:

Rather than rejoice with Zacchaeus for having such a monumental opportunity and honor, the people who **saw it** began to complain (v. 7). Everyone in the crowd (literally **all**) began to criticize Jesus for choosing to associate as **a guest with a man who was a sinner**. Just as with the woman caught in adultery ([John 8:1-11](#)), the people couldn't see beyond the sinfulness and sought to alienate Zacchaeus and disparage Jesus. When we examine ourselves in comparison to Christ, however, we will see how utterly sinful and unworthy we all are. Yet, the crowd pompously lambasts Zacchaeus rather than look introspectively at their own sins. In a way, he becomes their scapegoat which takes the focus off of them and places it squarely upon him. Consequently, the crowd sought to make themselves feel better about their own situation by pointing fingers at

Instruct

someone whom they considered as worse than they!

Rather than complaining and pointing out the perceived faults in other people, we must evaluate our own lives according to Christ's perfect standard. For this reason,



Jesus warns, "Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (Matt 7:5). We absolutely should speak the truth in love, but at the same time we should pay more attention to what we do and say in our relationship with Christ than in comparing ourselves to others. Therefore, let

us concentrate on who God has called us to be and what He has called us to do! We're not in a competition with others, but God has called us to obey and serve Him faithfully in every way. We shouldn't look at how much others serve, how often they share the gospel, or how much they give. We need to serve, share, and give faithfully as God directs—not just "enough" to get by, but generously and willingly because Christ first loved us and we desire to return that love unto Him!

How would you evaluate your relationship with Christ first and foremost and then your service, sharing, and giving through the church?

Question
6

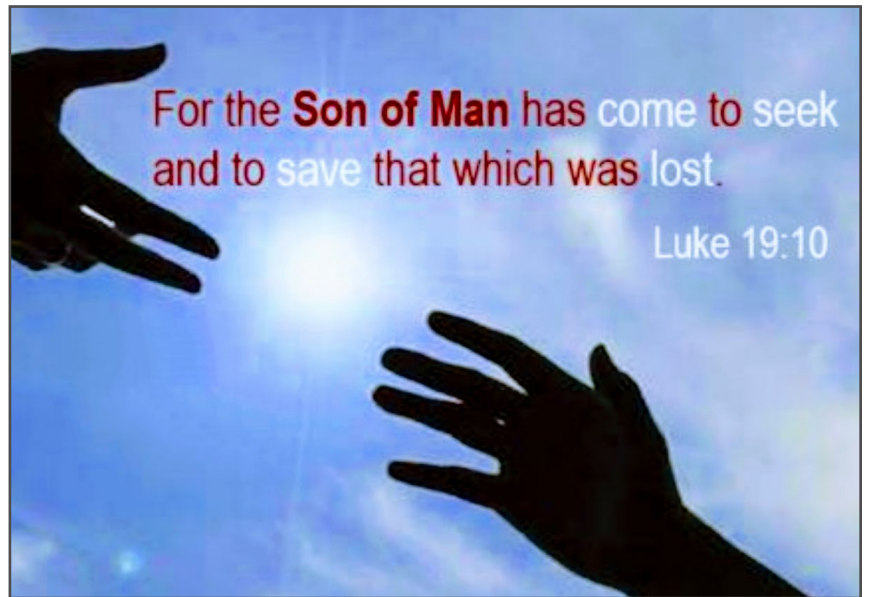
Luke 19:8-10

THE COMMITMENT:

In the midst of the complaining from the crowd, a transformation took place in Zacchaeus' life which moved him from death to life—unbelief to faith in Christ whom He had just personally met! As the crowd spouted their judgment, Zacchaeus stood and said to Jesus that he would **give half of his goods to the poor** and **if he has taken anything** wrongly (i.e. **by false accusations**) that he would repay it **fourfold** (v. 8). By virtue of his actions, we can observe how Zacchaeus repented of his sin (**false accusation**) and surrendered his life to Christ, prompting Jesus to say, "**Today**

salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham" (v. 9). When Jesus says because **he is a son of Abraham**, He doesn't mean that as a Jew based upon his physical heritage **salvation has come**. On the contrary, He means that Zacchaeus exhibited faith like **Abraham** and put his trust and confidence in the Lord ([Gen 15:6](#); [John 8:39-47](#)).

Upon Zacchaeus' commitment unto Him, Jesus reiterates His overarching goal to bring salvation to the entire world. Just as Jesus intentionally traveled through Jericho and deliberately sought to interact with Zacchaeus, He reminds us of His ultimate purpose: He **has come to seek and save that which was lost** (v. 10). When we have a personal encounter with Christ, it changes us dramatically as we can attest in the life of Zacchaeus. It changed



his perspective on his career, his wealth and finances, and his relationships with others. No longer was he concerned about amassing wealth, especially by defrauding others, but he was focused on obediently serving Christ by generously and willingly ministering to others.

In what ways has a relationship with Christ changed you and your perspective?

Question
7

Christ certainly wants us to restore and reconcile broken relationships caused by sin. Zacchaeus does this by repaying **fourfold** to those from whom he stole (see [Exod 22:1](#)). However, he goes beyond this by giving **away half of** his possessions (i.e. **goods**). Even if we don't give **half** our possessions **away**, we still need to give generously and cheerfully. When we give in the right spirit with the right motives, the Lord will bless us and use the resources to further His kingdom by advancing the gospel. When we commit our lives to Christ, we need to commit every area and not just a few that we can easily release to Him. For instance, we need to trust the Lord with our finances. Zacchaeus, for example, could have feared being able to make an adequate income now because he could no longer swindle people. Instead, based upon his

Instruct

actions, we can see that he trusted the Lord to provide and take care of him. When we have a relationship with the Lord, it should transform the way in which we view our resources and how we give our tithes and offerings. We should always give back to the Lord of our firstfruits (gross income). This may require that we curtail some of our spending on unnecessary items or our self-indulgent pleasures. Moreover, we shouldn't give the Lord our leftovers, but we should give the very best! Thus, Zacchaeus first gave himself to the Lord and then, out of an abundance of gratitude for what Jesus had done, he gave **away half of** his possessions as a way to honor the Lord and show his genuine heart of repentance.

How has Christ transformed your giving?

Question
8

As a people transformed by the gospel which has the power to save, let us continually mature in every area of our lives, including the idea of giving. Let us be a people who uses our money and resources wisely to bring the Lord glory; therefore, may we always act with integrity and righteousness in our financial dealings. In addition, let us seek to invest **joyfully** and generously in the work of the Lord which provides opportunity to proclaim the gospel and advance the kingdom. Since God has faithfully entrusted the stewardship of His resources unto us so that we might be ambassadors bearing His image, let us in turn trust our finances back to Him so that He can help us make wise decisions about how to invest our money most effectively in caring for our families, meeting our needs, and undertaking ministry in the local church which carries on Jesus' mission **to seek and save that which is lost!**

In the introduction, we met Irma Rene Smith who ran a tax accounting business which allowed her to become wealthy by charging hidden fees and altering the books. Although she never officially got caught, she began to feel miserable and discontent, knowing that what she was doing was wrong. One day, she had a life-changing encounter with Christ and fully surrendered her life to Him. The change was so radical and evident that she made restitution on all she had stolen. As her first act of repentance, she gave away half of her possessions out of spontaneous generosity for what the Lord had done in her life. Unlike Irma, we may have not developed an elaborate scheme like this to defraud or steal from people. Yet, we must still ask ourselves this one question: Have we fully surrendered everything in our lives to Christ? We need to give Him complete access to our thoughts, our speech, our behavior, our choices, our time, the talents He has given us, and, yes, the money and resources with which He has blessed us so greatly.

Let us transform our giving by surrendering our finances to the Lord. When we make a purchase, let us ask two questions: 1) Does it glorify the Lord? and 2) How can we use it to glorify the Lord? If the answer to the first question is “no,” then we shouldn’t make the purchase—especially if it causes temptation or even worse if it is sinful in itself. Likewise, we probably should avoid purchasing things which distract us in our purpose from maturing in the Lord and fulfilling our call to share the gospel and serve. What good is a shiny new boat if it hinders our quiet time, causes us to miss church and opportunities for growth, or isolates us from people with whom we can share the gospel? On the other hand, it can be a tool for Christ as well if we use it to take friends and family who would never come to church so that we might have the opportunity to share the gospel with them. It’s all a matter of perspective and discipline to execute God’s plan. Therefore, let us have a renewed perspective on giving and stewardship which reflects the transformation God has brought about in our lives through the saving power of His Son, Jesus. Let us surrender our lives first and allow Him complete control of our finances as well.

Incorporate

In what way(s) should salvation in Christ transform our perspective concerning our resources and finances as a church?

How can we gently spur one another to give more generously just as Christ has so graciously and sacrificially given to us?

How do our tithes and offerings help fulfill Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost? What would you say to someone who complains that the church is only interested in money and wealth?

Journal: Document God's Work

January 19, 2020



Giving as an Act of Sacrifice

Mark 14:1-9

Focal Verse:

“But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me.’”

back to
Table of
Contents

Mark 14:6

Introduce

In 1986 while campaigning on behalf of an incumbent United States Senator from South Dakota, Ronald Reagan tells the story of a chicken and a pig to illustrate the principle of sacrifice. According to his usual folksy, yet humorous style, Reagan begins, “It reminds me a bit about a story about the chicken and the pig who decided to go into town and look for a job in the city. And they spotted a sign in a restaurant window that said, ‘Ham and Eggs \$1.50!’ And the chicken suggested they go in. And the pig refused. He said to the chicken, ‘For you, going in is just a contribution; for me it’s a total commitment.’”^{*} When we think of Christ’s incarnation in coming to earth in the form of human flesh, we must recognize His “total



commitment.” He didn’t merely make “a contribution” as a good teacher or philosopher who showed us how to live a better life. On the contrary, He gave His very life as a sacrifice to provide salvation to each of us and rescue us from our sins by dying in our place—something which we could have never accomplished on our own!

Just as Christ gave Himself sacrificially to save us, we should give ourselves sacrificially to Him in return as well. When we die to our old way of life, Christ instills within us a new perspective and outlook which causes us to seek Him daily ([Luke 9:23-26](#); [Gal 2:20](#)). Although not explicitly talking about money or finances, Paul encourages us, “By the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service” ([Rom 12:1](#)). When we think of stewardship and giving, we often concentrate upon money and possessions—which do constitute a significant portion of the topic. Yet, as we must understand, we owe our very lives to Him because He alone has given us both physical life and spiritual (eternal) life.

Consequently, stewardship is all-encompassing; it’s the life we now live daily in Christ! This new life then entails that as His stewards we submit to His will in every area. We shouldn’t compartmentalize our lives in which we pick and choose what we make

Introduce

available to the Lord, but we must give everything entirely to Him as we learned in last week's lesson about "Giving as an Act of Surrender!" Therefore, we ought to live sacrificially for Him each day by allowing Him to guide every aspect of our lives according to His will and purpose. Certainly, living sacrificially in this way would include the act of giving of our finances and resources toward kingdom work as the Lord leads.

Sacrificial giving, however, doesn't mean that we should be miserly or stingy with the money and resources the Lord has graciously given us nor should we waste money on ineffective programs that don't honor Him and don't reach the world with the gospel. God gives us money and resources as both individuals and the church not to hoard, but to use for His glory! We see such an example of sacrificial giving in [Mark 14:1-9](#) where a woman worshipfully anoints Jesus with costly oil in the days before His crucifixion. Although others chastised her for using such an extravagant gift, she acted as the Lord led her and used what she had to honor and glorify Him! Let us follow the example set by this woman whom Jesus praised and give sacrificially as He directs, using everything we have for His glory!

Key
Question

In what ways has the Lord called you to give sacrificially?

In Reference



See, Ronald Reagan, "[Remarks at a Campaign Rally for Senator James Abdnor](#)" (Sioux Falls: September 29, 1986).

Mark 14:1-2

THE PLOT AGAINST JESUS:

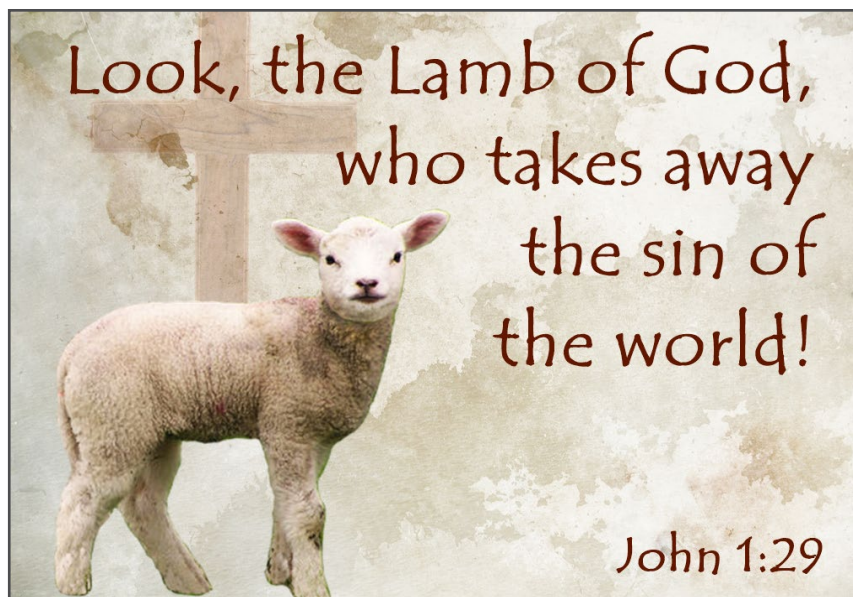
As Jesus' earthly ministry quickly comes to a close and His crucifixion draws near, the Gospel of Mark details the heinous plot by Jewish leaders in Jerusalem to **put Him to death** (v. 1). **Two days after** Jesus taught His disciples about the last days and His ultimate return to establish His kingdom in full ([Mark 13](#)), the **chief priests** and **scribes** met together to plan how they could get rid of Jesus who threatened their authority and power. Their meeting coincided with the upcoming festivals of **Passover** and the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**. In this meeting which Matthew notes occurred at the chief priest Caiaphas' house ([Matt 26:3-4](#)), the religious leaders agreed to use any means necessary to **put Jesus to death**, including the unscrupulous use of **trickery**. The very people who should have served as examples to the rest of Israel at this holy time engaged in utter deceit and sinfulness.

In-Depth Information



The **Passover** and **Feast of Unleavened Bread** were actually two distinct festivals which overlapped after the first full moon in the Spring. The **Passover** memorialized Israel's release from bondage in Egypt in which an unblemished lamb was slain to remind the people of the blood applied on their doorposts that spared their firstborn from death ([Exod 12:1-13](#)). On the same day that the **Passover** began, the week-long **Feast of Unleavened Bread** also commenced ([Exod 12:14-20](#)). This festival not only celebrated the harvest of barley, but also reminded people of the quick preparation needed to flee Egypt the night the Lord Himself passed over and administered the tenth plague. Therefore, the people were to rid their houses of any leaven by the first day of **Passover** on which the lamb was slain.

Because the population of Jerusalem swelled during these two festivals anywhere from 50,000 to 250,000, those who met agreed not to carry out their plot **during the feast** since it could cause **an uproar of the people** (v. 2). Any time a large number of people gathered together, hostilities and riots can easily occur and rapidly spiral out of control. The Jewish leaders, therefore, didn't want to risk jeopardizing their standing with Rome because of a skirmish with Jesus and His followers. Yet, as we know from history, they had to move up their plan to kill Jesus for whatever reason. That week



of **Passover** Jesus became the perfect **Passover** Lamb who shed His blood and died on the cross to take away the sins of the world ([John 1:29](#)). Despite the best-laid plans of **the chief priests** and **scribes** to avoid any action during the festivals, the will of the Lord was fulfilled and Jesus laid down His life as the greatest, once-and-for-all sacrifice that delivered the

world from the bondage of sin on **Passover!**

When we think about sacrificial giving, we can learn three principles from the last week of Jesus' earthly life and ministry. First, Jesus knew the cost and He continued undaunted. Jesus knew the plan the Father had would ultimately require His life; He wasn't caught off guard or surprised by the animosity of the religious leaders against Him. Throughout His ministry, Jesus constantly spoke of His impending death to His disciples by describing how He would be rejected and killed by **the chief priests** and **scribes** ([Mark 8:31](#)). Knowing this, Jesus never once backed off His teaching to placate them or changed His attitude, but He remained faithful in every situation!

Second, Jesus obeyed even after counting the cost! Although He did pray that the Father might remove this cup from Him ([Mark 14:36](#)), He still faithfully submitted to His will. For this reason, Paul can say, "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil 2:8). Finally, Jesus became the perfect example that we ought to follow! The story didn't end with Jesus' death and ruination, but it shows God's provision through the resurrection. Jesus knew the victorious end of the story; He knew He could trust and submit to the Father who would always deliver and supply His needs no matter what He asked of Him!

How does Jesus' sacrificial death serve as an example unto us?

Question
1

Several years ago, a man faced a difficult decision after looking at his bank account and

trying to reconcile his expenses and offerings with his income. If he gave his tithe at the beginning of the month, he most likely wouldn't have enough to pay his bills and appease his creditors. That month, his job had suddenly informed him that they would drastically reduce his hours. Thinking about what Christ had given for Him, he wrote the check for his offering anyway knowing the cost. Indeed, later that month he didn't even have enough to pay for his groceries, so he went to the store and bought them on credit, not knowing when he would be able to pay for them.

That same day, a friend called and needed help repairing her computer, so he graciously agreed to fix it. As he was leaving, she offered to pay, but he refused and told her that it was an act of service done in love. However, she kept insisting and

eventually slipped a check among his things. After he arrived home, he found the envelope and removed the check; it was written for the exact amount of the groceries which he had purchased that morning! He had given sacrificially and faithfully, knowing that the Lord would provide and sustain—even though at the time he didn't exactly know how. He



He counted the cost, gave faithfully as the Lord led, and trusted the Father whom He knew would always deliver and sustain him no matter what He may have asked him to do!

How has the Lord provided for you and sustained you when giving sacrificially and faithfully?

Question
2

Mark 14:3-5

THE PRICE OF SACRIFICE:

While the religious leaders plotted to kill Jesus, He traveled to **Bethany** some two miles from Jerusalem to dine with **Simon the leper at his house** (v. 3). As he reclined **at the table**, an **unnamed woman** in Mark's account **came** to perform an act of worship and service for her Lord. From John, we know the woman as Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha ([John 12:3](#)). She brought **an alabaster flask of very costly oil** made of

Instruct

spikenard from India which was probably a family heirloom passed down through the generations given its cost. Later from the disciples' complaints, particularly Judas as identified by John, we know **the oil cost more than 300 denarii** which would have been more than a year's wages ([John 12:4](#)). Despite this staggering cost, **the woman broke the flask** and **poured** all the contents **on Jesus' head**. What great love and devotion this **woman** had shown to her Lord and Savior.

When we think of sacrificial giving, we most often recall the story of the widow depositing her two mites into the temple treasury—an insignificant amount to the wealthy who were throwing in their coins to make a show of piety ([Mark 12:41-44](#))! For this woman, she had given everything she had—not from a legalistic sense of duty, but because she loved the Lord with all her heart. Perhaps, we may remember the story of the widow who only had enough oil and flour for her son and herself during a time of severe drought and famine; she was even preparing to cook their last meal and then slowly die when the prophet Elijah visited ([1 Kings 17:12](#)). However, she used those meager rations to show hospitality and feed him as the Lord directed her. Because of her obedience, the Lord provided! Although we're not told how wealthy this woman and her family in Mark could have been, we still know that this reflects a significant investment and required substantial sacrifice—not many of us could afford to give up a year's wages!

How has the Lord asked you to sacrifice over the years?

Question
3



Despite this generous and sacrificial act, it angered some in attendance at this dinner—primarily Judas because he was the treasurer and planned to steal the money entrusted to him ([John 12:6](#)). Those **who** had become **indignant** began to clamor and ask, “**Why was this fragrant oil wasted**” (v. 4)? In their minds, she could have **sold** this **oil** and

given the proceeds **to the poor**, so **they sharply criticized her** (v. 5). Perhaps, some of them may have had noble intentions for helping **the poor**, but they missed the true intention and act of worship meant to honor the Lord. Indeed, nothing is ever **wasted** when we follow the Lord's direction as this **woman** obviously had based upon Jesus' response to the disciples' criticism as we will see in [verses 6-9](#). The disciples had an earthly perspective, but when we give sacrificially we need to make sure we have a godly perspective and we do what is right according to His will.

As we know from experience and by virtue of illustration in this very story, money can often become a major source of contention in the church as well as marriage. It can cause division, dysfunction, and even fractures as every person has his own idea of what to do with the money—just look at the disciples' response here! Although it doesn't have to be a consensus about how we use the money in the church (marriage should function somewhat differently in this case), God never creates division and discord if we truly seek Him first! At the same time, however, we can't let our own personal desires and plans get in the way of what God wants. Thus, we need to act in such a way that brings Him the most honor and glory. When we have a godly perspective and utilize our resources as an act of worship which the Lord blesses, money and finances never become a source of contention; in fact, they will always be a source of genuine joy and satisfaction when used rightly to honor Him.

How can money become a source of contentious debate in the church? How can we prevent this from happening?

Question
4

Problems will always arise when we don't take time to seek the Lord and rely upon Him for direction in giving and using the resources with which He has blessed us. The disciples at this meal immediately began to interject their own ideas! Rather than taking time to observe and watch how Jesus responded, they began to complain and rebuke the woman! Before we give sacrificially or even use monies to fund certain programs, projects, or ministries, we need to take time to seek the Lord. We need to pray, read Scripture, and wait for confirmation about how and what God desires us to give sacrificially. In the church, we should also listen to leadership with whom God has invested the responsibility to guide the body in making decisions and keeping everyone on the same track. We can and should ask questions for clarification and analyze the spending according to biblical principles. Unless the use of money for ministry doesn't meet biblical qualifications, lacks ethical standards and integrity, or

Instruct

fails to honor the Lord, we should never let finances become a source of contention among God's people!

If we have clear direction from the Lord, we should also not feel pressured to conform to the expectations of the crowd when we give unto the Lord sacrificially. In other words, no one should coerce us in our giving; we should always seek to meet the expectations of our Lord and Savior! In this current situation at Simon the leper's



house, the disciples were not so much angered over the amount the woman gave, but how she used it. Our giving and the giving of others should always bring rejoicing when a genuine act of worship is rendered unto the Lord! Therefore, let our all giving be an act of worship which incites praise, instills honor, and advances the kingdom in the way the Lord

intends. Let us look to Him for how He wants us to give and use our resources. After all, everything belongs to Him anyhow; He has a right to use it as He sees fit!

What should be our motive when we give sacrificially? Why should we rejoice when we see others giving sacrificially?

Question
5

Mark 14:6-9

THE PRIORITY IN SERVICE:

After the disciples began grumbling about this genuine act of worship, Jesus rebukes them. He tells them to leave the woman **alone** and asks **why** they **trouble** her because **she has done a good work for Him** (v. 6). He further acknowledges her spirit of worship and alludes to His impending death when He explains that they will **always have the poor** and **can do them good whenever** they want, but they will **not always have Him** (v. 7). Hence, He speaks of the significance of her act **to anoint His body for burial beforehand** (v. 8). In rebuking the disciples, Jesus isn't slighting the poor and rejecting the biblical principle of helping the needy ([Deut 15:11](#); [Psalm 41:1](#)), but

He's helping the disciples to re-focus on the most-urgent need. In a few short days, He would die on the cross and they would no longer have the opportunity to minister to Him physically. The woman, therefore, has done the right thing because she has chosen the better of the two options at the moment.

Sometimes we face a tough choice between two good options; both can be noble as in this case and neither choice may be wrong. However, we must decide between the better of the two choices for ministry. What should we do then? We shouldn't necessarily base our choice primarily upon the immediacy of the need; in other words, we shouldn't think that if we don't meet the need ourselves right now, then it will go unmet as if God has no alternative or hasn't laid it on the heart of others. Instead, we must base our decision on what has the greatest impact and can bring the most honor to Christ at that moment according to God's will. Therefore, God will help us recognize the best choice! For this reason, God led the woman **to anoint** Jesus with this **costly** perfume because it served as the ultimate act of worship prior to His crucifixion and burial.

When we are faced with two choices that are good, how should we decide which option is the best?

Question
6

Jesus then praises the woman because **she has done what she could** (v. 8). Literally, the Greek says, "She has done what she had." In this sense, Jesus is probably saying **she** gave **what she had** in reference to her sacrificial gift; thus, she gave everything she had to Him! As a result of this sacrificial gift, Jesus announces to everyone at this dinner that **this woman will be** remembered for **what she has done wherever the gospel is preached in the world** (v. 9). She will be upheld an example for everyone to follow! This woman didn't give this extravagant gift so that others would take notice and praise her sacrifice; she didn't give so that the Lord would bless her materially. On the contrary, she gave from a genuine spirit of love and devotion, wanting to honor the Lord with everything she had. We too should give with such a motivation as God leads us. We should give sacrificially and generously as an example for future generations to follow! Like this woman, we need to lead by example with a humble heart and loving spirit.

How can you be an example for others to follow in your giving?

Question
7

Throughout Scripture, we have many examples of sacrificial giving, but none grander and more significant than that of Jesus Christ. He left all His riches and comforts in heaven to come to save a people who rejected Him! Despite this mockery and rejection, Jesus still came and gave His very life for us. What love and devotion He has shown us! Although Christ is the ultimate example of how we should give sacrificially, we have numerous examples of people who gave sacrificially out of their genuine love and devotion for Christ. For instance, Paul recognizes the Macedonians' generosity in 2 Corinthians 8:3-4: "For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." Let us follow in the footsteps of this woman in Mark who anointed Jesus with costly oil as well as the Macedonians who gave generously out of their poverty ([2 Cor 8:2](#)).

Over the years, God has led us as a church to give sacrificially in many ways that have had a tremendous impact upon ministry around the world. We have supported countless missionaries and funded many mission trips that have spread the gospel worldwide. We played an instrumental role in the funding of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and started Bible Baptist College (now Arlington Baptist University) through which thousands of ministers and missionaries have been trained. We developed one of the first bus ministries and had one of the first radio broadcasts in using cutting-edge technology at the time to reach the community! We did all this to the glory of the Lord and we did all this together as God's people. Through individual sacrifice and giving, we were able to impact the community, spread the gospel, and glorify the Lord. Therefore, as we embark upon this new year in 2020, let us continue to seek the Lord when we give sacrificially, so that He may lead us to give in the most-effective way that honors Him and advances His kingdom.

Incorporate

What should our motivation be when we give sacrificially?

Who do you know that's been a good example of faithful and sacrificial giving? How did they give sacrificially?

How can we teach and encourage others to give sacrificially without coercing them?

January 26, 2020



Giving Enables Effective Service

Luke 8:1-15

Focal Verse:

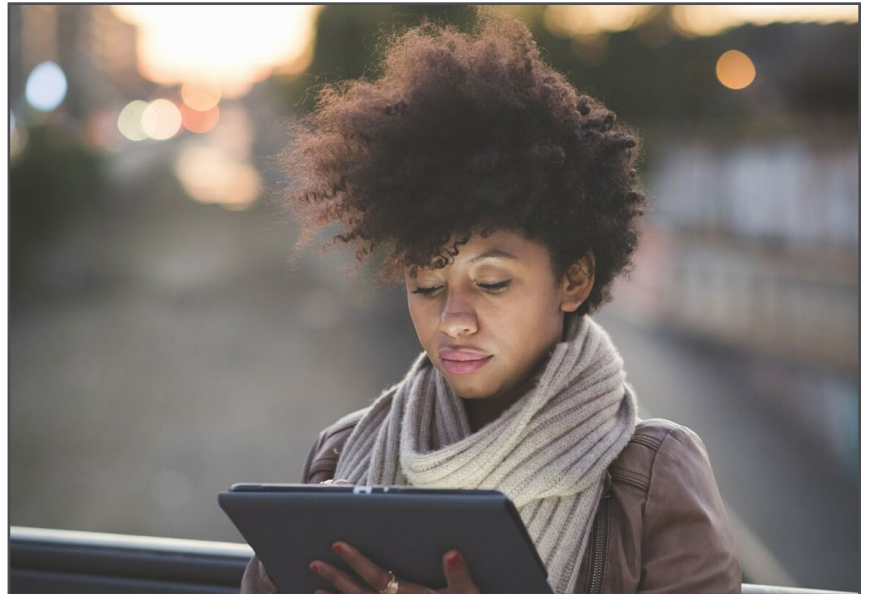
“And Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.”

Luke 8:3

back to
Table of
Contents

Introduce

After Vacation Bible School every summer, we as a church follow-up by visiting with every family who attends that year, particularly those who do not attend any church regularly. One year, Louise Derrick and I were assigned a young twenty-something-year-old woman whose child had come. Upon arriving at the house, we had a cordial conversation with her father who then took us and introduced us to his daughter—or at least he tried. As she sat on a bench on the porch, she never acknowledged us as she continued



to play on her iPad and smoke. The father chastised her for being rude and eventually she glanced up and said hello after he prodded her. Finally, she did put the iPad down and somewhat engaged in conversation—albeit one-sided. It quickly became apparent that she didn't care about what we as a church taught or believed; she only saw VBS as evening childcare during the summer on which she could pawn her child. As we entered her home, I tried to share the gospel with her since it appeared very likely that she had no relationship with Christ. After I uttered one sentence, she interrupted, "I'm going to stop you right there! I don't want to hear it! Churches always ask for money; that's their only concern." Immediately, I responded, "Have we mentioned money even one time during our conversation? What we have come to offer you requires no money. In fact, it's a free gift that no amount of money could ever buy." Handing her a tract because she refused to listen, I instructed her to take time to read it and consider what it says because even as a young person we're not guaranteed to live tomorrow. Hopefully, she did take time to read that tract and come to understand the importance of a relationship with Christ.

However, this experience did cause me to stop and think. I wanted to tell this woman, "How do you think we can fund ministries to provide food and material to care for your daughter during VBS?" But I didn't. When we truly think about it, the gospel is free, but it requires money and funding to help us undertake ministry. Often, people think like this woman; they don't have to contribute to support ministry either

Introduce

because they wrongly see the church as greedy with too much money or they fail to understand what resources are required to do ministry effectively. For example, it takes a significant amount of resources to pay for the upkeep of the facilities, utility bills, insurance, office supplies, printing, material for discipleship, and so much more that enable the daily operation of the church body. Moreover, God calls some to serve full-time to equip the body for ministry ([Eph 4:11-16](#)) and ensure that the church remains unified in Christ to accomplish the purpose for which He has called us. To enable these ministers to function in the way the Lord intends and not become distracted by the cares of this world, the church should support them with an adequate salary on which they and their families can live ([1 Tim 5:17-18](#); [1 Cor 9:3-23](#)).

Overall, the conducting of ministry requires resources, but the gospel itself is a free gift which is given graciously through Jesus Christ. We must remember this principle when we consider stewardship. In fact, even Jesus depended upon others for support and assistance, so that He could undertake the ministry to which the Father had called Him. As we look at [Luke 8:1-15](#), let us not overlook the fact that the people to whom Jesus ministered and transformed their lives showed their gratitude by supporting His ministry to take the gospel to the world. Let us also realize that we have that same opportunity to contribute toward the spread of the gospel worldwide because we love Jesus and have a relationship with Him.

Key
Question

What are some things in ministry that require money of which we might not normally think?

Luke 8:1-3

THE NEED FOR PARTNERSHIP IN MINISTRY:

Before introducing Jesus' teaching on the various responses to the gospel, Luke includes a summary statement about His current ministry. After performing miracles in healing a centurion's servant (7:1-10), raising a widow's son from the dead (7:11-17), and forgiving a sinful woman (7:36-50), Jesus turns His attention more to the proclamation of the gospel by taking the message into all the world. Consequently, Luke notes that Jesus **went through every city and village, preaching** the good news about **the kingdom of God** (v. 1). Not only were the **twelve** disciples with Him, but also **certain women** to whom Jesus had ministered by healing them **of evil spirits and infirmities** (v. 2). In fact, Luke identifies three of these **women** by name: **Mary Magdalene** (i.e. Mary from the district of Magdala) from **whom** Jesus had cast **seven demons**, Joanna who was **the wife of Chuza**, an official in **Herod's** government, and **Susanna** whom we only know by name from this text. Yet, he points out that **many others** also accompanied Jesus on His mission (v. 3).

We may often quickly skim through this text without giving much consideration to its importance. When we do, however, we miss a key principle about stewardship and giving. Luke takes special care to emphasize that **many** people **provided for** Jesus, and by extension His disciples, **from their own substance**. In other words, they assisted Jesus with their material possessions, goods, and money, so that He could concentrate on undertaking ministry and focus on spreading the gospel **in every city and village** to which He **went!**

As a full-time traveling preacher, Jesus had to rely on the generosity of others to provide for His basic needs since He didn't earn money by conducting a trade or business. Jesus even points this out, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Luke 9:58). In many ways, Jesus depended upon others for



Instruct

food, lodging, and other physical needs, so He could concentrate on taking the gospel into the world.

How do you partner with FBCFW to make sure that the gospel can be proclaimed around the world?

Question
1

Although Jesus did rely upon generosity from others to help Him engage in ministry, He ultimately depended upon the Father who provided by leading these people to give **from their substance**. Yet, God led these **women** and **many others** to contribute toward Jesus' ministry so that He could maintain focus on the most-important aspect: sharing the gospel **in every town and village**. When we all faithfully give our tithes and offerings to the work of the Lord, we can focus on spreading the gospel rather than on the daily operations of the community. Sometimes we may overlook the expenditures of the church because we don't think of the body as a household. Like any household, the church has expenses for repairs, as we have seen with our own foundation, utility bills on a much-larger scale, insurance, and many other expenditures to operate efficiently. Imagine coming into a crumbling, decrepit building. That would become an obstacle and a liability for ministry! Imagine attending a service and the lights go off. Certainly, worship could continue in the dark, but it would become a huge distraction!

How can we invest our resources so that others may focus on evangelizing and sharing the gospel?

Question
2

Even though the gospel is free, it takes resources to enable the people of God to reach the world—whether through VBS, summer camps, mission trips, the publication of curriculum and discipleship material, and hosting community events like Fall Festival and block parties. We could list many more things here, but this plainly demonstrates how it requires resources—whether human, financial, or other—to take the gospel into the world. Imagine for a moment if Jesus had to raise money to support Himself constantly. He would be less effective in spreading the gospel because He would have to take time from His ministry to focus on His own needs; however, because of people like these **women** and the **many others**, God led people to graciously give so that He would have provision and be able to concentrate on ministry. After this summary

statement, Luke does indeed give the basis for Jesus' ministry in the parable of the sower and the seed. Giving financially, therefore, doesn't excuse us from giving of our time and talents to serve; however, it should inspire us to throw off every obstacle that hinders and focus on presenting the gospel to the world at all costs!

Luke 8:4-8

THE NEED FOR A PREACHER IN THE WORLD:

While teaching in this region, Jesus drew a **great** crowd of people **from every city** which was curious to hear Him speak and perhaps to witness a miracle (v. 4). As He **went** from town to town preaching, He told a **parable** to the people, so that they might know what kind of responses to the gospel they can expect. He used a common, everyday illustration from life in that region with which everyone should have been familiar and able to understand easily. In this **parable**, He talked about a **sower** or farmer who goes into the field to plant **his seed** and describes the different kinds of soils upon which it **fell** (v. 5). Although the focus in the parable lies on the types of soil, or different responses to the gospel, we cannot overlook the fact that there needs to be a farmer, or preacher, to **sow** the message.



Throughout the New Testament, believers have been commanded to proclaim the gospel and take it into all the world ([Acts 1:8](#); [Matt 28:19-20](#); [Mark 16:15-16](#)). God could have chosen any means to deliver the gospel, but He specifically chose us to proclaim its message! Therefore, we must be ready at all times to “preach the word” ([2 Tim 4:2](#)) and “give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” ([1 Peter 3:15](#)). Despite all the technological advancements today, the best and most-effective way to share the gospel is still through face-to-face interaction and personal invitation. The world needs someone who will tell them the truth rather than simply telling them what they want to hear. Paul posits, “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher” (Rom 10:14)? Consequently,

Instruct

we can't dismiss the need to share the gospel and assume the world will hear if we don't tell them! We need to **sow** the message of the Word faithfully and let the Lord work in the hearts of individuals.

Why is it important to take the gospel into the world? How do people often respond differently when we talk to them in person rather than online or through social media?

Question
3

In this illustration, Jesus Himself serves as the **sower**, so that we might follow His example (v. 4). As the **sower** goes out into his field to scatter the **seed**, he likely concentrates on sowing it in productive and fertile ground; however, some of the **seed** is inevitably caught in the wind or inadvertently falls onto the path (i.e. **wayside**). Falling on the well-worn, hard dirt of the path, the **seeds** don't penetrate the **soil** and lay exposed so that **the birds** come and **devour** them. Moreover, those that somehow germinate and sprout will **be trampled** by those walking along the path. Other **seed fell** upon rocky ground (v. 5). The thin layer of topsoil quickly gives way to a rocky layer which will not allow the roots to penetrate and find the nourishing water that the plants need to flourish. Thus, the plants **withered away because they lacked moisture**.

Seeds also **fell** upon the ground at the edge of the good ground which had not been tilled and weeded; the **thorns** in these uncultivated areas grew along with the plants, but they eventually **choked** them out by consuming all the nutrients and moisture in the soil (v. 7). Finally, Jesus describes how other **seed fell** upon **good ground, sprang up**, and eventually produced a bountiful harvest of a **hundredfold** (v. 8). These seeds had all the nutrients they needed to grow strong and obstacles in nature did not come along and prevent the message from taking hold. As a result, Jesus calls the people to understand the parable and apply it by exclaiming, "**He who has ears to hear, let him hear.**" However, as we shall see in the next section, the people, including the disciples, failed to grasp its meaning!

With our modern technology, this parable may seem strange to our ears because we technically don't **scatter seed**, but we till and plant with more efficiency. Even so, not all the **seeds** we plant take root and grow. Some are indeed **devoured** by **birds** or other animals, others may not have enough water, and still others may not have the proper nutrients they need to grow. Yet, the farmer doesn't worry about the individual

results of a few **seeds**. On the contrary, he does his job and plants the entire field, seeing the overall picture of the harvest at the end; he allows God to grow the crops.

Sharing the gospel is the same!

God has called us to **sow** the message by taking the gospel into all the world. We should faithfully respond to this call and not worry about the results. God is the One who produces transformation and growth—not us. Our job is simply to go!



Therefore, we should go into the world and share with everyone whom we meet. Jesus teaches, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matt 9:37-38). We can’t answer for people and pre-determine how they might respond to the gospel. That’s not our job! We should faithfully **sow** the **seed** and leave the results up to the Lord.

Why should we focus on the job of telling the gospel to the world and not the results?

Question
4

Luke 8:9-10

THE NEED FOR PRUDENCE IN THE WORD:

After Jesus called them to understand the **parable**, the disciples admit their ignorance and ask **Him what** it meant (v. 9). Before giving them the interpretation to the **parable**, Jesus explains why some can’t understand by citing [Isaiah 6:9](#). He points out that to believers (literally **to you**) **it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God** whereas unbelievers (i.e. **the rest**) cannot comprehend (v. 10). As Isaiah writes, “**Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.**” In other words, unbelievers can understand the **parable** in simple, practical terms, but they cannot comprehend the deeper spiritual meaning and application. In this sense, the meaning isn’t hidden from them, but instead they don’t get it because they don’t have the spiritual eyes with which to **see** it.

God hasn’t blinded their eyes nor has He kept them from understanding so to speak. On the contrary, He has spoken to them in very plain and simple terms. However,

Instruct

the sin in which they live has hardened their hearts and they have refused to listen.



Because of their own sin, they cannot see the truth and the error of their ways. For anyone who has written and edited their own work, we can clearly see how our minds function to obscure the truth from us at times. Despite my best efforts to proofread this curriculum and make it easily readable every month, errors still remain whether grammatical, typographical, or

issues of clarity. As I proofread, I already have in mind what the lesson should say, how it should say it, and what words should be used, so I often don't catch errors. My mind simply supplies the "correct" terminology or phrasing as I read. It's not that I can't read and understand the words on the page, but that my mind already has made up what they say collectively.

Parables function much the same way as editing our own work. Many people already have in their minds what they believe and they cannot see the error of their ways. As they go through life and even hear truthful instruction, they don't pay attention because their minds are already made up. They hear truthful teaching, but it goes in one ear and out the other. Technically, they can understand the literal meaning of the story, such as what it means to plant a seed, from practical, personal experience, but they cannot comprehend how Jesus uses it to make a spiritual point about the gospel and the **kingdom of God**. To unbelievers, it's simply a story about a farmer planting his crops and some of them don't survive! To believers, it's a story about the spread of the gospel and the varied results of the people who hear.

After you became a believer, how did you begin to understand the Bible more clearly?

Question
5

THE NEED FOR PERSISTENCE IN MINISTRY:

Finally, Jesus arrives at the spiritual application of the **parable** and what it all means. He explains that **the seed is the Word of God** or the gospel (v. 11). He reveals the different responses of people to the gospel—that is the different types of soil. Those represented by the **seed** falling on the path are the ones who reject Christ outright.

The devil comes along and takes away the Word, so that they won't **believe** and **be saved**. The rocky soil represents those who listen and **receive the Word with joy**, but it takes **no root**—they may outwardly accept it, but they don't truly understand it.

They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. [1 John 2:19](#)



They don't lose their salvation per se, but they never had it in the first place ([1 John 2:19](#)). For them, it was simply like trying something new or participating in a fad; when they grow weary and face trying times or temptations, they merely move on to something new and, perhaps, more exciting.

The seed **that fell among the thorns** depicts those who **hear the Word**, but they are really indifferent as it makes no impact on their lives (v. 14). They are more concerned with their personal affairs and the comforts of this world. The **thorns choke them with the cares, riches, and pleasure of life**, but they produce no mature **fruit**. Paul describes Demas in [2 Timothy 4:10](#) in this way: "For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." Finally, some **seed fell on good soil** which reflects those who hear and respond to **the Word** genuinely and faithfully (v. 15). They believe and experience transformation in their lives; they have **a noble and good heart** and patiently **bear fruit**.

For us as believers, this **parable** demonstrates how we must exercise persistence in ministry by faithfully fulfilling God's call to service. The farmer in this story doesn't worry about where the **seed** falls; he faithfully fulfills his mission to plant. He didn't become discouraged when some **fell** on bad soil or others faced obstacles that hindered the plants from taking root; he continued undaunted and undeterred.

Instruct

Sometimes we tend to become discouraged and give up too quickly when we don't see immediate results. We also can't let the fact that the gospel may sometimes fall upon deaf ears discourage us from proclaiming the Word to the rest of the world. On the contrary, we must continue to preach and serve faithfully!

In what ways does ministry require persistence?

Question
6

Too often we become focused on the results when we should be focused on the mission. Indeed, numbers and results indicate the work of the Lord; each number does represent a soul for whom Jesus died, but they don't always necessarily indicate the measure of success. Success in the eyes of the Lord comes through our obedience! God has called us to obey Him; therefore, we should obey and let Him do the work. When we submit to the Lord and turn the ministries over to Him which has entrusted us, He will bring about results! In fact, we could never obtain these results on our own, so let us look to Him and allow Him to do the work. We should just be faithful to go where He sends and say what He tells us!

We may cringe like the young woman in the introduction when we talk about finances and stewardship in the church. However, God knows this is just part of life, so He spends a great deal of time addressing money in His Word. Through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, He has paid our sin debt; to all He offers the free gift of eternal life if only we would accept it. Yet, it does require resources to take the gospel into all the world. The message itself is free, but we need resources so that we can concentrate on the proclamation of the gospel and make the greatest impact we possibly can by going into every city and village, beginning right here in Fort Worth.

In many ways, God has blessed us as individuals and as a church. Therefore, let us continue to partner in ministry faithfully, so that we can make a great impact and leave a lasting legacy in which the kingdom of God greatly advances. As a church, God has led us to undertake many missions right here in Fort Worth, but also in many other states and countries around the world—indeed too many to list here! However, let us partner together as the Lord blesses and leads; we can always do more collectively than individually! Let us give of our own substance, as well as our time and talents, so that that the gospel may not be hindered, but it may continue to be proclaimed loudly without obstacle around the world.

Incorporate

In what ways do you partner in ministry through FBCFW? How can we as a church encourage more to partner?

Why does giving financially not preclude us from giving of our time and talents through service to the Lord?

In what ways has God called you to proclaim the gospel to the world right where you are? Why can we reach more collectively than individually?

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